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Classified By: A/DCM Susan Ball for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A/DCM and Poloff delivered reftel demarches to multiple offices in the MFA and MoD. The Slovaks welcomed the information and asked us to share the results of the comprehensive review of Afghanistan/Pakistan policy well in advance of the NATO Summit. MFA Political Director Igor Slobodnik Slovakia's first NATO PermRep) is eager to consult with Embassy officials when the review is completed. MFA has 500,000 Euro for civilian assistance to Afghanistan available. MFA does not have a clear plan how or where to spend that money, however, and the General Staff has different assumptions about its best use than do our interlocutors at MFA and in the NGO community. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) A/DCM delivered reftel demarches to the Director of MFA's Security Directorate, Juraj Podhorsky, on February 24. Podhorsky welcomed the information and outlined Slovak thinking on potential new avenues of support for the NATO effort in Afghanistan.

¶3. (C) Podhorsky confirmed Slovakia will deploy another 50-person guard unit to Afghanistan in the coming weeks. This contingent will join the Dutch in Uruzgan Province. Major Peter Sliacky, J-3 General Staff, told Poloff separately that five additional troops will be sent to the guard unit in Tarin Kowt at the same time, bringing that unit to its full approved compliment of 50, and the total number of Slovak troops deployed with ISAF to 231. Sliacky said this deployment would occur during the first week of March.

¶4. (C) As for election support, Podhorsky said nothing has been decided, but the MOD is considering the possibility of sending a small medical team of 6-8 prior to the August 20 elections. This group would then remain in country after the elections. Sliacky said a small team from the General Staff, including himself, would travel to Afghanistan with the units deploying in March to assess the requirements for deploying a small team in support of the Presidential elections.

¶5. (C) Afghanistan is a "priority" country for Slovak Official Development Assistance. There is, however, still a good deal of uncertainty about how to link civ-mil efforts and it is not clear that the Slovaks are communicating well interagency about how to expand Slovak participation in Afghanistan to the civilian sector. Podhorsky stressed new FM Lajcak's "personal commitment" to continued engagement in Afghanistan, but noted that the impact of the global economic crisis could affect the level of Slovakia's aid commitment.

¶6. (C) MFA interlocutors said 500,000 Euros have been allocated for reconstruction assistance, but that there are no fixed plans for how to spend the money. Drahomir Stos, MFA Desk Officer for Afghanistan, described a push from higher levels in the government to allocate the money to projects in Uruzgan Province, where many Slovak soldiers are deployed. Stos was skeptical, however, that any Slovak NGO would be qualified or willing to work in such a dangerous environment and so close to military forces. Podhorsky expressed similar concerns, and pointed out that legally, only the MFA can

second its employees to temporary duty in Afghanistan.

¶ 17. (C) Sliacky said the General Staff has discussed the best use of the 500,000 Euro in reconstruction assistance and firmly believes it ought to be spent on projects in Uruzgan, where Slovak soldiers operate. He was surprised to hear the money could go to an NGO, however, and said he assumes it will be spent on projects that would be implemented by Slovak soldiers working in a PRT.

¶ 18. (C) Zuzana Fialova, a Slovak civilian who spent two years working in Afghanistan on an MFA-funded mission, said MFA's limited funds could be put to much better use in the north of Afghanistan, where results can be more easily achieved and with fewer resources. She doubted that any Slovak NGO could be convinced to work in Uruzgan.

¶ 19. (C) Post shares Fialova's assessment, and will engage with the Slovaks to encourage them to spend at least some of their money on a concrete project in which Slovak NGOs can actively participate. Post is working with contacts in Kabul and Washington to get more information for MFA and Slovak NGOs on the work of American and international non-profit organizations in Afghanistan.

EDDINS